

Discussion Questions and Answers

Introduction to the O'odham and their Traditional Lands

What does O'odham mean in English? **People**

What does Tohono mean in English? **Desert**

What does Akimel mean English? **River**

What two major cities are the O'odham reservations close to? **Phoenix and Tucson**

What do call yourself? **(Answers will vary)**

Where do you call home? **(Answers will vary)**

How many Native Nations are in Arizona? **22**

How many Native Nations are there in your state? **(Answers will vary)**

The Wind and Rain, A Traditional O'odham Story

Who found Wind and Rain for the people? **Hummingbird**

Why is rain so important to the O'odham? **In a desert environment, water is not abundant. Rain replenishes the river, where water is drawn from for irrigation. It also supports the wild plants that are another source of foods.**

What do the O'odham do to welcome wind and rain back each year? **The O'odham hold special ceremonies, a part which is the Nawait ceremony.**

What is used by the O'odham to make ceremonial wine? **Saguaro fruit**

Ways the O'odham use the Saguaro Cactus

What are some other uses for the saguaro cactus? **Making a calendar stick from saguaro ribs. Making a burden basket from the saguaro ribs. Using a cactus boot to play games, store things, as a scoop for food or water.**

Traditionally a calendar stick is used to record memories of events that happen in O'odham communities. What are some events in your community (or in your own life) that you would want to record? (Answers will vary)

Saguaro ribs are used as part of the frame of a traditional burden basket. What do you use today that is like a burden basket? (Answers will vary, but might include a backpack or a bag.)

TO DO: Got to the additional resources to create your own calendar stick.

Irrigation Farming

How many homes did the O'odham traditionally have? Two

What did the O'odham use to build their winter homes? Adobe

What did the O'odham use to build their summer homes? Mesquite and Ocotillo branches

What did the Akimel O'odham use to water their plants? They used flood plains. This type of irrigation is called Ak-chin farming.

What foods do the O'odham grow on their farms? Tepary beans, wheat, corn, melons, and squash

What traditional foods do the O'odham gather from the desert? Chia, saguaro fruit, and cholla buds

What are some of the healthy benefits of traditional foods grown wild in the Sonoran Desert? Cholla buds are high in calcium and help balance blood sugar levels.

Basket Weaving

What materials do the O'odham use to make baskets? Devils claw, beargrass, and yucca

Draw a design for a basket. Before you start, consider:

What will you use your basket for when it is finished?

What shape will your basket be?

What plant or man-made materials will you use to weave your basket?

What designs will you weave into the basket?

What colors will you use for your design?

Now you are ready to draw your basket design.

Water Rights in the Desert

The O'odham have a unique way of watering their crops using floodplains. Does anyone remember what they call that type of irrigation? **Ak-chin Farming**

What methods did the American settlers use to irrigate? How did that affect the Native O'odham communities? **They built large canals, such as the Florence Canal. This caused the water to be diverted and more to be used. The O'odham no longer had access to enough water to support their farms.**

What are some of the ways that the U.S. government tried to help the O'odham get their water back and what were the problems with these methods? **Water pumps (too expensive), wells (became dry, not enough water to support), and the Coolidge Dam (water went to American farmers and was not allotted to Native farmers).**

How did the O'odham fight for their water rights? **They took the water issue to court and used legal methods. They won, resulting in the Arizona Water Settlement Act, which provides Central Arizona Project water from Colorado River to the O'odham.**